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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: HAITIAN POLICE DIRECTOR RESPONDS TO EMBASSY  
CONCERNS

REF: A. PAP 1599

[1](#)B. PAP 1597

Classified By: Ambassador James B. Foley, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Amid escalating violence and doubts surrounding the ability of the IGOH to ensure stability, Haitian National Police (HNP) Director General (DG) Leon Charles explained that he was having difficulty complying with Post's request to relinquish 21 long-guns to U.S.-controlled bunker storage. In a conversation with the DCM on June 7, Charles appealed for patience as he sought to secure substitute weapons for the affected officers so as not to leave them unarmed. The DCM reminded Charles that the return of the guns was an issue of great concern and could affect U.S. cooperation with the HNP. He also repeated Post's unease regarding the expansion of the 17th recruiting class and any attempts to increase the number of future recruits by lowering standards. Ahead of the handover of \$2.6 million in U.S.-funded vehicles and other equipment for the HNP, Embassy Police Advisor explained that the U.S. would require written agreement regarding use, control and accountability before any equipment would be released. Charles also provided an update on HNP-MINUSTAH cooperation, police investigations, and the Palace Security Unit (PSU), and agreed to accept proposals for a new HNP field uniform. Charles' ability to respond to Embassy requests and Haitian security needs is eroding. It is increasingly clear that the HNP requires more supervision and guidance. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) After a brief discussion regarding recent events and a joint MINUSTAH-HNP raid in Bel Air on June 4 (reported earlier as ref A), the DCM told Charles that the latter's failure to comply with Post's request to return 21 specifically-identified long-guns and place them in U.S.-controlled bunker storage could have severe consequences in terms of further U.S. cooperation with the HNP. (Note: Embassy Police Advisor noted that as of June 2 Charles had only surrendered 14 of the 21 guns and that subsequently on June 3 Charles gave instructions to retake 12 of those 14 guns due to the worsening security situation. End note). Charles begged for patience and understanding, saying that in the current climate of well-armed gang-led assassination operations against the entire HNP, he would provoke a mutiny in his ranks if he were to force his men to give up the few arms they had. He said, "my men will think I am trying to get them killed if I ask a unit of 30 guys with only 10 weapons to give 5 of them back." Charles said that he was trying to acquire more shotguns on the open market in order to provide his men at least some weapons in exchange, but that it would take time. The DCM acknowledged that the situation was dire, but reminded Charles that Post's instructions were clear: we must have the guns in our control and we want this to happen soon. He asked Charles to respect U.S. control over the bunker and to appreciate how seriously the U.S. takes its responsibility over the weapons therein. Charles agreed to respect the Embassy's control of the bunker.

[1](#)3. (C) The DCM declared flatly that Post's cooperation with the HNP required greater transparency and dependability from Charles. In particular, he said persistent setbacks and rumors surrounding the training program for new recruits constantly aggravated the U.S. partnership with the HNP. By placing 800 recruits into the 17th class without consulting Post, Charles had jeopardized programs for in-service training and compromised the quality of new cadet training. Suggestions that the HNP was possibly trying to lower standards or recruit special groups for the 18th promotion scheduled to start in September were equally unacceptable, the DCM said. Charles replied he was working closely with CIVPOL to ensure the 17th promotion received adequate training. He also claimed that he was running out of applicants who passed the examination in 2004, and was considering inviting those who scored near the pass line to enter the 18th promotion. (Note: According to the OAS vetting group, the pass rate used for the pool of recruits for the 15th, 16th and 17th classes was 52%. The HNP could access roughly 2,200 potential recruits if it calls in those who

scored between 48% and 52%. End note).

14. (C) Furthermore, the DG said he wanted to admit roughly 240 people fired from the PSU into the 18th class. Because this group received incomplete training toward the end of the Aristide administration, they were fired following Aristide's departure and many were now joining up with gang leaders out of anger at their dismissal. Charles hoped to include them in the 18th class to allow them to graduate and return to work. The DCM explained in no uncertain terms that the HNP could not use any special treatment to admit particular groups into the police - whether they be ex-military or ex-police or any other faction. He reminded Charles that the PSU was the center of corruption and criminal behavior under Aristide and that these individuals were not the kind of officers the HNP should be recruiting. If there is a shortage of recruits, the DCM offered to press CIVPOL to begin to organize a new test to replenish the supply of eligible candidates rather than scrounging for recruits among the dregs of previous entrants.

15. (C) The DCM pressed Charles to explain troubling reports regarding the PSU, including attempts to grant the unit further autonomy and a dispute over an HNP helicopter. Charles acknowledged that the PSU was worrisome. The unit supposedly had 700 M-14s prior to February 2004, Charles claimed, but now had only 60. Some PSU officers were allegedly providing ammunition to pro-Aristide gangs; five officers were arrested at the end of May for various crimes. Charles said he maintained very little operational and no budgetary control over the PSU. The unit requested custody over the one (broken) helicopter that Haiti possessed (which was operated by the PSU under Aristide) but Charles had instead promised the helicopter to the Haitian Coast Guard.

16. (C) Charles offered an upbeat assessment of MINUSTAH-HNP cooperation that clashed with recent comments from CIVPOL Commissioner Dave Beer (ref B). Unlike Beer, who claimed the unit dysfunctional, Charles said the HNP-CIVPOL Anti-kidnapping unit was up and running with 3 HNP officers (led by HNP Press Spokesperson Gessy Coicou) and 4 CIVPOL officers. The unit was working diligently on recent cases, he said. Charles failed to mention any of the problems Beer described regarding HNP obstructionism towards the establishment of the Joint Command Center (JCC) as well, giving a vague but upbeat forecast for the opening of the CIVPOL-HNP JCC at the office of the Departmental Directorate of Operations (DDO) and of the MINUSTAH military-HNP JCC at Fort National. DDO Lochard has been reportedly the stumbling block in cooperation with CIVPOL.

17. (C) Although previously reticent, the DG accepted a proposal from the Embassy Police Advisor to change the HNP field uniform. The all-black and typical camouflage outfits worn by CIMO (crowd control) and SWAT units are exceptionally easy to fake and pro-Aristide gangs have allegedly used fake or real uniforms when committing crimes in order to tarnish the image of the police. Charles repeated his desire to maintain the HNP "dress uniform" for use by normal officers, but agreed to accept proposals for a new uniform to be used in the field by special units. Embassy Police Advisor promised to provide several alternatives soon and pledged the U.S. would fund the new uniforms.

18. (C) The DCM asked Charles again regarding the status of investigations into incidents of special importance to Post. Charles replied that the HNP had completed its investigation regarding the killing of an AMCIT girl during the February 10 raid of Ravix's base on Route Freres, and the investigation of the December 1 prison riot. Investigations into the alleged shootings of protesters on February 28 and April 27 were still ongoing, he said. He promised to provide a copy of the completed reports to Post.

19. (C) Comment: The fact that we have to continually press Charles on very basic, fundamental issues at the core of HNP behavior (not to mention the unrelenting deterioration in urban security) has made it clear that Charles is unable to deliver the kind of control and reform the HNP needs (and the U.S. demands) at this time. The problem is that Charles is arguably better than any of the alternative candidates. Without appropriate authority and support, nobody in the DG position is likely to have any better luck than Charles has. The HNP suffers not only from a dearth of strategic planning, but also from an inability to put any of those plans into practice. It has become increasingly apparent that what is needed is a new model for managing Haiti's security apparatus, including international oversight and authority over the HNP. We are working with our CIVPOL colleagues to finalize such a plan. Meanwhile, we will continue to monitor the HNP recruiting process, work with CIVPOL and the HNP to organize a new admissions test, and pay closer scrutiny to developments in the Palace Security Unit. End comment.